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FROM: Athens

TO: Secretary of State

NO: 698, November 6, 7 p.m.

PRIORITY

ACTION PRIORITY DEPARTMENT 698, INFORMATION PARIS 60, ROME 50, NICOSIA 34, ANKARA 22, LONDON, THESSALONIKI UNNUMBERED

PARIS FOR BURNS AND JAMES

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Subject: Election Aftermath

Today with Papandreou scheduled to see King possibly to receive mandate to form government finds Athens political scene extremely muddled. Maneuvering is on full force.

Center Union with 140 seats has problem of finding extra seats for working majority (ERE total is 128). Papandreou has consistently stated he will not accept direct support from Communist-line EDA (30 seats) and he is looking for block of some deputies or individual ERE deputies (as well as 2 progressives) who would declare themselves "independent" and move over to him. Meanwhile Papandreou is reportedly planning to insist in his talk with King that he receive mandate to form government plus power to dissolve Parliament. This latter would give him hand stick over ERE which is anxious avoid elections for time being.

ERE leader Caramanlis has now stated publicly there is no question of his retiring from "public life" and he saw King November 5. After his audience he told press that in

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problem still more difficult; those trying to simplify it are making a false appraisal, he said. We understand extremely strong pressure had to be exerted on Caramanlis all day Monday by ERE colleagues, the King, and various public figures to keep him from leaving country.

ERE is hoping to block King's granting immediate mandate to Papandreou and to have caretaker regime continue in office until Parliament meets (presently scheduled December 11) on grounds CU lacks majority. EDA finds itself in key position of controlling 30 seats in this turbulent situation, and pro-EDA press is talking openly for need of CU prompt collaboration with EDA.

At this juncture Palace has decisive role. Ironically its aim throughout recent months has been to effect something of a stand-off in strength of two major parties by reducing Caramanlis position while at the same time not pushing Papandreou out in front. It looked forward to some form of coalition solution with perhaps Venizelos or some ~~treaty~~ trick and true royalist as Prime Minister in order to take both Papandreou and Caramanlis out of the picture, although it is currently pictured as wanting to presuade ERE unity as a party. ERE unity reported as reasonably firm at moment, although more severe tests yet to come.

Papandreou emerged from election with more strength than Palace had bargained for, and both Crown and Armed Force remain highly suspicious of him. Reports from chose-in and usually well-informed source indicate Chiefs of Staff pressing King not to give Pandreou mandate or, if denial infeasible, to ensure that Defense Minister be King's man. Otherwise, Armed Forces leaders believe Pandreou will undertake maneuvers to split Armed Forces unity with view to weakening position of both Palace and military.

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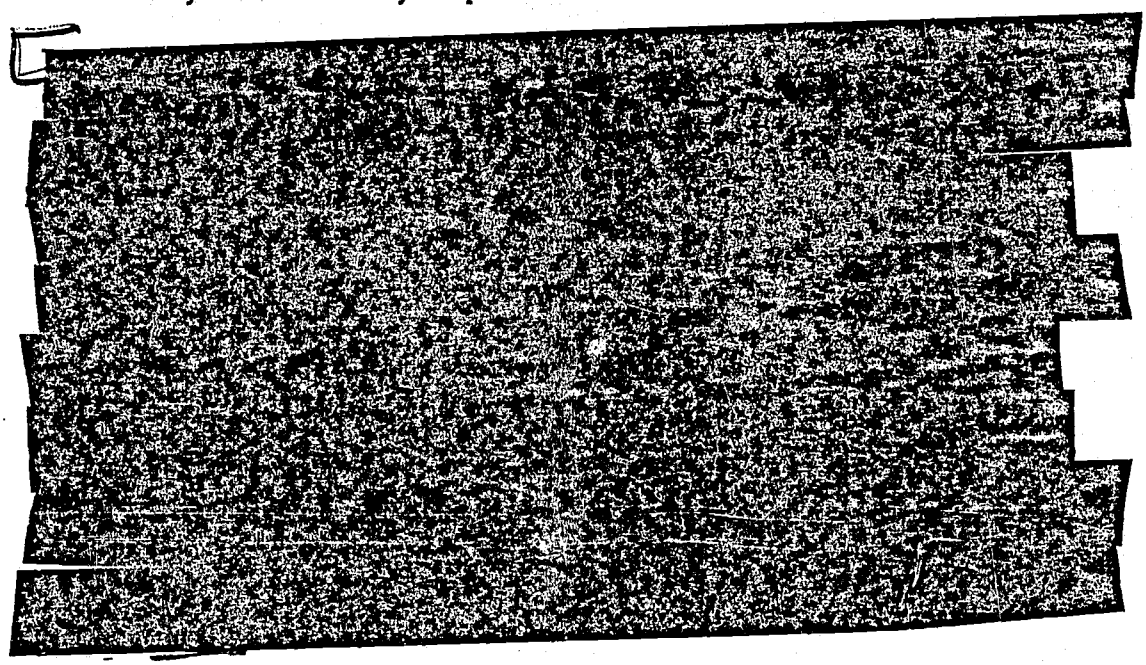

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